



Representative
Al O'Brien

REPORT & SURVEY TO THE 1st DISTRICT



February 2004

Dear neighbor,

I hope the New Year brings blessings to you and your family. By the time you receive this report we will have already started this year's 60-day Legislative Session, scheduled to run from January 12 to March 11.

As you may recall from last year, we tackled many challenging issues. However, there is still plenty to do. Improving Washington State's economy is our major goal, and everybody in the Legislature has work to do in that area.

We will focus on boosting our economy. I am committed to finding answers, to breaking through partisan gridlock in Olympia and passing reforms that make the difference.

Our children remain among our top priorities and they deserve the best gift we can give them, the one they won't outgrow: a solid, world-class education.

This session we'll concentrate efforts on ensuring that we have quality schools for our kids, affordable and dependable health care for every Washington family and the creation of good jobs for everyone.

It's our job to give our kids the world's best education and to retrain our workers so our people get the best jobs, the kind that include health coverage and retirement benefits.

I want to hear your views on these and many other issues. I am committed to working with you on the things that matter in the 1st district.

I am interested in hearing what you have to say about the issues you'll find in this newsletter. As always, your ideas, comments and questions are welcomed.

Sincerely yours,

Al O'Brien
State Representative
1st Legislative District

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WIPING OUT THE PRIMARY SAVED US BIG BUCKS



As you know, in a special Legislative Session held in December, we agreed to cancel our state's 2004 presidential primary. The reason was obvious: neither major party would have paid much attention to the results. So, by canceling it, we saved almost \$7 million.

In this election year Democrats are using the February 7th precinct caucus meetings to begin selecting their presidential candidate, and Republicans have no contest for their nomination. It doesn't make sense for Washington taxpayers to pay \$7 million to stage a fruitless presidential primary. However, I want to make sure you know that calling off the 2004 primary is a one-time deal — Washington state's presidential primary is in place for the 2008 election.



Keeping our Communities Safe

Introducing harmful substances into our communities puts everyone at risk. Methamphetamine is not only harmful to those who use it, but also to those who are exposed to the toxic substances that are used to manufacture it.

This session I am working with others to get funding for a Meth Strike Team for Snohomish County. Such teams are very effective in dealing with meth crimes in the region.



THE BUDGET: making ends meet

Last year we adopted a two-year budget. This session we'll write a much smaller,

supplemental budget to reflect changes in the economy since last spring. But it will still be tough.

The supplemental budget will have to provide funding for higher than expected K-12 enrollments, prison populations, and General Assistance caseloads.

We will also need to find funding to pay for fighting forest fires last summer, and to fund the collective bargaining agreement for homecare workers.

Keeping our Streets Safe

I will continue working to keep drunk drivers off our roads and highways. This is why I am proposing legislation that would allow cities and counties to establish drunk driving courts.

These courts can be much more effective than regular courts when it comes to keeping drunk drivers off the streets. They can recognize and ensure that those who are arrested on drunk driving charges receive appropriate sentences.

In these courts judges can better monitor the activities of convicted drunk drivers, such as ensuring that they go to treatment, stay employed, and stay away from the use of alcohol.

The courts are designed to sentence drivers who would benefit from substance abuse treatment.

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Education



If we want to be generous to kids, the one gift they won't outgrow is a good education. But it takes a lot of work to create world-class public schools in Washington State.

We need to find the best way to pay for schools. An education finance study will help us find how our money will have the most impact for students. We need to know where the money goes, by making education funding more transparent and schools more accountable when they put our money to work in Washington.

This study will help us see our money follow students from pre-school and into college, so we can best judge its effectiveness and make intelligent decisions. Finding and keeping the best teachers is crucial to school success. Rewarding achievement and recognizing leadership will keep the best teachers in the classroom where they make a difference for our kids.



Health care for all, not just a few

Last year one of our greatest accomplishments was passing the prescription-drug legislation and it is now time to review its implementation. That's a start, but we've got plenty of work still ahead.

We have to address a crisis in liability insurance: the lack of sufficient medical-malpractice coverage — and when coverage is available, the huge price tag for it. The medical-malpractice issue and patient safety will be high on everyone's agenda this session.

In search of solutions, we're exploring options and reviewing ways to make the insurance industry more accountable for its rate-setting decisions.



Building Communities

The American dream for nearly everyone is to be a home owner.

Unfortunately, for many Washington residents

homeownership can seem far from the realm of possibility. This should not be the case. For years, my priority has been to ensure the availability of affordable housing for everyone.

This session I am working on a bill that would create the Manufactured Home Assistance Program. It would provide low-income families access to financing and thereby help them achieve their goals of owning homes.

This type of assistance will help many first-time home buyers and senior citizens.



Jobs, jobs, jobs!

I believe in small businesses and in making government more efficient and responsible.

Fighting for your families' future by forging a partnership with businesses, government and

families is a priority. We need to make sure Washington is the best place to work and raise a family.

This session I am sponsoring the creation of Small Business Incubators in the state. From this effort we hope to develop and grow new small businesses across Washington.

We are promoting business investment in our economy and creating more good paying jobs, with benefits, by building on success in Washington's high-tech industry.



Please
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stamp
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Representative
Al O'Brien

PO Box 40600
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**Survey – what
do YOU think?**

Education

Do you have children or grandchildren in our public schools?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Do you think our public schools receive enough state funding?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Do you believe a good education is the surest route to a good job?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Do you worry about your child or grandchild getting into college, or having enough money to pay for tuition?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Health Care

Do you think it is better to help our seniors and disabled citizens remain in their own homes as long as they can, rather than moving them to nursing homes?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Do you believe that the health of children affects their ability to achieve in school?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Good jobs

Do you think the Legislature was right to do all it could in order to convince Boeing to build its new jet in Washington State?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Do you think offering tax incentives is a good way to help businesses succeed?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If so, would you still feel that way if it meant less funding for schools and health care?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Do you think we should increase our workforce training programs to make sure our employees have skills that match the needs of our employers?

☐ Yes ☐ No

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